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MORALITY, SELF-CONTROL AND CRIME

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This paper offers evidence to specify further Self-Control Theory by investigating its predictive strength relative to morality as well as its interconnections with morality in accounting for criminal probability. Using random sample household survey data from Lviv, Ukraine, we confirm that self-control is an important predictor of criminal probabilities in an unusual cultural context. However, morality is also shown to be a strong independent predictor with strength that seems to exceed substantially that of self-control. In addition, taking morality into account significantly reduces the coefficients for self-control, sometimes eliminating them entirely, and morality shows little interaction with self-control in its predictions of the measures of criminal probability. The results suggest that the recently formulated Situational Action Theory, which features (weak) morality as the prime cause of criminal behavior and questions the relative importance of self-control, should be taken seriously. Overall, the results confirm the importance of self-control as a factor in misbehavior, yet, they also provide a mandate for greater attention to morality as a potent variable in understanding misconduct.

Key words: self-control, crime, morality.

Self-control appears to be one of the best and most reliable predictors of crime [28]. Scholars now must situate self-control relative to other variables and further explore how such variables may inter-relate with self-control in the production of criminal behavior. In the specification process so far, morality has been relatively neglected. Even though sociologists have long thought that moral beliefs exercise a powerful influence on human behavior, only recently has morality come to the forefront as a main causal variable in a theory of criminal/deviant behavior and little empirical effort has been made to situate it relative to self-control. However, Wikström and Treiber in their Situational Action Theory (SAT) contend that morality is central in explaining crime, with self-control relatively infrequently becoming relevant [41, 42]. The contentions of SAT warrant research attention because few studies have directly investigated the interrelationships among self-control, morality, and indicators of crime. Using random sample household survey data from Ukraine, we explore the importance of individuals' morality relative to their self-control in predicting probabilities of criminal behavior.

Self-Control and Crime

The Gottfredson/Hirschi theory maintains that people are motivated to engage in acts of force or fraud because such acts are gratifying [14]. However, because individuals with strong self-control, which is said to be inculcated early in life through particular child rearing practices, can anticipate and avoid potential long range costs associated with misbehavior, they are less likely to commit acts of force or fraud (crime). But, individuals lacking self-control tend to act without regard for the long range and, consequently, experience greater probability of misbehaving. Hence, criminal behavior is explained by low self-control in the presence of criminal opportunity. But since opportunity to pursue force or fraud for self-gratification is omni-present, a strong general, negative relationship between self-control and criminal conduct is expected.

Self-control theory has inspired an unusual amount of research, almost all of which has shown self-control to be a strong and persistent predictor of criminal behavior, even in different cultural contexts [7, 28, 29, 36]. Research also suggests that other variables influence crime or deviance independently of self-control and that they sometimes acts as contingencies for the full operation of self-control [8, 23, 35]. Therefore, to more fully account for criminal behavior, it is important to specify further the links of self-control with potential predictors of crime identified by other theories.

Morality and Crime

Morality seems to have been relatively neglected by students of crime, as least as a major force. This underemphasis is illustrated by Gottfredson and Hirschi's statement concerning moral beliefs and values suggesting that they "typically [refer] to how people feel about their acts rather than to the likelihood that they will or will not commit them" (15, P. 88). De-emphasizing morality represents a break with much sociological theorizing. Beginning with Durkheim (1933 [1895]; 1961 [1903]), generations of sociologists (examples: Blake and Davis, Etzioni, Parsons) have contended that moral norms and regulations are critical to social organization because they restrain individuals from committing deviant acts and encourage social solidarity and cooperation between members of society [5, 9, 10, 11, 24]. Etzioni, in particular, denies that human behavior can be reduced to utilitarian cost-benefit calculations, which is often assumed by control theories of crime that have been prominent in recent decades [11]. He stresses that people frequently act unselfishly and "irrationally," choosing dutiful responses or refraining from illegal acts precisely because they are guided by moral principles and values.

Substantial empirical evidence suggests that (lack of) morality predicts criminal behavior reasonably well [17, 26, 30]. Despite substantial variation in the way morality has been measured, the evidence consistently supports the idea that moral commitments or moral feelings show some crime-inhibiting effects.

In addition, evidence of morality's effect on misbehavior can be found in research that concerns Social Control and Social Learning Theories because both to some

degree lay claim to the concept of moral beliefs [2, 18]. Moral belief is specified as a component of the social bond in Social Control Theory, and in Social Learning Theory moral beliefs are regarded as one form of personal definitions favorable to violations of law. The research concerning those two theories has consistently shown associations consistent with conventional morality being a predictor of criminal behavior [3, 21].

Yet, despite such evidence, the effect of (lack of) morality in explaining criminal behavior has not been widely explored nor has its import relative to other variables been fully determined. In particular, it is still not clear whether morality is the main factor in conformity or whether it is one of many equally important variables. Moreover, all of the contingencies, under which morality operates with more or less force, have not been identified and confirmed empirically. This is particularly true concerning potential cultural variations because almost all of the research has been conducted in well-surveyed Western nations.

Morality, Self-control, and Crime

Although much remains to be learned about morality and crime, research so far suggests that it may be of more relevance than most criminologists recognize. Yet, only recently has an attempt been made to develop a criminological theory featuring morality per se as the main factor in misconduct and to specify its position relative to variables featured by other theories. Wikström's SAT, however, attempts to do just that [41, 42]. Although the theory is too complex to explicate fully here, we draw attention to several general statements from it that bear on the present research focus.

According to SAT, all human action including acts of crime and deviance is mainly a product of individual perceptions of action alternatives and choices. The primary characteristic that affects how individuals perceive their action alternatives is morality. Wikström defines morality as "the rules prescribing what is right or wrong to do" and emphasizes that, while general morality is a stable and sometimes even habitual property of individuals, moral rules are specifically oriented, guiding human behavior in particular circumstances [42, P. 75]. Ultimately, most individuals refrain from misconduct because, in accordance with their moral beliefs, they either do not see crime as a viable alternative or their moral action is habitual. In addition, Wikström argues that his theory applies to different types of crime as well as in various contexts [42].

Not only does SAT feature morality as its central variable, but its authors directly address self-control relative to morality. Acknowledging that self-control influences an individual's ability to deliberate in making choices, they nevertheless contend that self-control is not generally of much importance for misbehavior because it comes into play only when individuals experience a conflict between their morality and criminal motivation [42]. Only under such circumstances, which are comparatively rare, do individuals deliberate about their action alternatives, and only then is self-control likely to be relevant. Overall, the SAT theorists claim that "morality is a more basic factor in the causation of acts of crime" than self-control [42, P. 111].

While no prior research has been designed to test the claims of SAT, the few empirical studies that have examined both self-control and morality provide evidence consistent with its main implication. Yet, these studies, with one exception, have treated morality simply as a control variable or have measured it as one component of a larger construct such as social bonds or “definitions” concerning criminal behavior. Despite the obliqueness of such studies, overall they do suggest that the effect of morality on misbehavior may be independent of self-control, that morality predicts criminal probabilities more effectively than does self-control, and that morality sometimes mediates the relationship between self-control and measures of crime [23, 27]. Yet, these previous research efforts do not permit strong conclusions about the relative effects of self-control and morality.

Thus, there is a dearth of research explicitly exploring the relative effects of self-control and direct measures of morality on criminal behavior. In what seems to be the most direct test of the interrelationships of morality and self-control in predicting crime, Schoepfer and Piquero used scenario methods with a random sample of undergraduate students to try to explain minor theft and assault, hypothesizing that self-control might be irrelevant for individuals with high morality [31]. They found that both self-control and morality had significant independent effects on intentions to steal and assault. Yet, support for the hypothesized interaction in which effects for self-control are located exclusively among individuals with weaker morality is reported only for the crime of theft.

Therefore, it is important to explore in more detail the interrelationships between morality and self-control in explaining criminal conduct. Previous research in which morality has been only indirectly measured may not tell the full story. Also, the results of the Schoepfer and Piquero study using direct measures may not be generalizable beyond a particular college student population; the results might be different in another cultural context and when alternative measures of self-control are used [31].

Present Research Focus

Overall, theoretical arguments and empirical research on self-control, morality, and misbehavior suggest that both low self-control and weak morality are important in crime causation. But the literature implies different things about the relative effects of self-control and morality on crime and deviance as well as their interrelationship. Self-Control Theory implies that self-control will be the primary variable in crime explanation. If so, self-control should be more strongly related to measures of potential criminal behavior than other theoretical variables such as morality, and it should retain its predictive power even with competing variables controlled. Alternatively, the accumulated body of literature on morality, especially the theorizing by Wikström and Treiber, implies that morality is the more powerful predictor of crime and deviance and that it probably operates independently of self-control [43].

Thus, there are a number of theoretical possibilities concerning the relative importance of self-control and morality, which we attempt to address using a sample

of adults in Ukraine. We aim to contribute to the literature in two specific ways. First, we add to the body of research situating self-control in the larger array of explanatory variables for criminal and deviant behavior. We do that by assessing the relative strength of self-control and moral beliefs for criminality. Whereas previous research indicates that both factors are good predictors, there is little direct evidence to assess which one may be stronger. Second, we test the applicability of self-control and SAT theories, both of which claim to be general theories, in a country that has rarely been the object of criminological research and which is culturally and historically distinct.

Methods Sample

The data for this study are from a random sample household survey conducted in Lviv, Ukraine, in the fall of 2006. The study was reviewed by two U. S. university institutional review boards that considered potential harm to research subjects and approved procedures for protecting anonymity. Actual sampling and data collection were performed by SOCIOINFORM, a professional survey organization based in Ukraine. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 500 eligible adults. Households were selected using a stratified two-stage sample selection procedure. In each randomly selected household, one adult, 18 years or older, with the most recent birthday was interviewed. To increase accuracy of reporting and minimize negative feelings that respondents might have when answering sensitive questions, such as reporting on past and projected misconduct and moral feelings, those questions were answered away from the interviewer on a written questionnaire, which was returned to interviewers in sealed envelopes, identified only with an interview number.

Given that surveys are less common in Ukraine and that this survey is probably the first self-report household survey of crime conducted there, concerns about accuracy are warranted. Yet, the relatively high admissions of various criminal acts contradict the notion that respondents were intimidated because of skepticism about anonymity or other fears. And, the basic relationships usually found in self-report crime surveys are also observed in these data [31]. First, females and older respondents report fewer incidents of past misconduct as well as project fewer chances of future deviance. Further, there are strong positive correlations between individuals' and peers' misconduct found in almost all other surveys. Third, a moderate negative association between religiosity and misconduct also frequently observed in survey research is present in these data.

The one notable departure from the findings of most Western surveys is the higher levels of violence reported by the Ukrainian respondents. Twenty seven percent of the respondents admit that they physically harmed another person on purpose and 34 percent admit that they used violence or the threat of violence to accomplish some personal goal in the last five years. The observance of higher levels of violence in Ukraine is consistent with the findings of a recently published self-report crime survey of adults in another former Soviet bloc country – Russia, the close neighbor of Ukraine and a nation with many similar cultural and socio-economic characteristics [35, 36].

Finally, higher levels of one kind of violent crime in Ukraine as compared with Western countries are documented by the official international crime statistics on homicide issued by the United Nations [40]. In addition, higher incidents of other types of misconduct in Ukraine are confirmed by Transparency International, which has repeatedly ranked Ukraine as one of the more corrupt countries of the world, as well as by the results of some crime victimization studies conducted in Ukraine [22, 39].

The Context: Contemporary Ukraine and the City of Lviv

Ukraine is unusual and thereby especially interesting as a site for assessing possible effects of self-control and morality on criminal behavior. Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Ukraine has undergone profound changes. The shift from socialism (state ownership) to capitalism (privatization of all branches of the economy) has been paralleled by significant alterations in morale and in government regulations, which were modified to be more suitable for capitalism [13, 20]. Thus, in a society previously characterized by idealistic collective goals and values enforced by strict authoritarian controls, individualistic pursuit of financial success has emerged as the major goal. Moreover, freedom and independence now enjoyed by Ukrainians might have come at a price: The welfare state is eroding, and a so-called “gangster” capitalism and corruption are flourishing, accompanied by much insecurity and anxiety among Ukrainian citizens. Therefore, it is quite possible that mechanisms of internal control, such as self-control and morality, have been rendered less effective as people have tried to adapt to a freer but more merciless environment. On the other hand, personal moral principles and internal constraints may still function for individuals who have them to inhibit crime and deviance, even in the face of large socioeconomic and other social changes. Given these possibilities, assessment of the powers of self-control and morality to inhibit deviant behavior is especially important in this unusual environment. This is particularly true because the authors of Self-Control Theory and the authors of Situational Action Theory similarly contend that their respective theories are not dependent on cultural context.

While the culture of Ukraine seems to provide an especially useful context for the present investigation, Lviv, located in Western Ukraine close to the border with Poland, seems to be a particularly suitable locale within Ukraine. It is one of the twenty four Ukrainian regional centers and is the largest city in this part of Ukraine. Founded in 1256, Lviv historically has been considered a “capital” of Western Ukraine and the cradle of true Ukrainian culture and language. This was especially true when, under communist rule, Russian ethnocentrism dominated other parts of Ukraine. Lviv was also the birthplace of the Ukrainian independence movement, and most recently has become the stronghold for the participants of the Ukrainian “Orange Revolution” of 2004 supporting the embattled Ukrainian president Yuschenko. In many respects, Lviv is more “Ukrainian” than the capital of Ukraine, Kiev, where Ukrainian is not as widely spoken, and many large cities located in Eastern Ukraine, closer to the border with Russia, where large percentages of the population identify as Russians and speak Russian as their first language.

*Independent variables**Self-Control*

Cognitive-based measures of self-control are most often employed in research, probably because they are less prone to tautology than are behavioral measures. The Grasmick et al. twenty-three item scale is perhaps the most popular [16]. We collected responses to the 23 items of the Grasmick et al. scale, using a five-category response format, to create the cognitive measure of self-control. Higher numbers reflect more self-control. Like Grasmick and his associates, after determining that a one factor solution is reasonable, we simply summed z scores. Alpha is .81, which is equal to the value of alpha in the original Grasmick et al. study.

Morality

We employ a cognitive conceptualization of morality, which implies that whether morality predicts crime or not depends on various conditions, some of which we investigate. Our conceptualization, and the notion of morality implicit in Wikström's argument, calls for respondents to register their moral judgments of various specific acts. However, to reduce potential cognitive consistency biases, we use respondents' moral judgments of specific acts to form a general measure of morality.

Operationalizations of morality have varied widely, with some scholars using direct and some indirect indicators and some focusing on things like feeling of guilt, endorsements of wider value systems, and direct statements of moral attitudes. Our sample judged whether various acts are "right" or "wrong," phrased in terms of their "moral acceptability" to the respondents. This reflects the conception of moral action by Wikström and tracks survey work by Tittle [33, 42, 43]. Eight acts, seven of them representing force or fraud and one asking about excessive consumption of alcohol, are the focus of the survey. Respondents were asked how morally acceptable to them it would be to do each of these acts. Responses were in five categories ranging from "always acceptable" to "never acceptable." As is typical, the responses are skewed and are collapsed into three categories. A general measure was computed by summing z scores for each of the eight morality items ($\alpha=.87$).

Dependent Variables

We collected self-reports of seven force and fraud offenses as well as respondents' projection of their likelihood of performing them in the future. However, we report only the results using future projections. Since the past reports and self-projections are strongly correlated (.82), we assume that both tap into the same underlying construct of criminality. Yet, the projections of future crime seem preferable. First, they show higher criminality than the past reports, which suggests that respondents may have been holding back at least some information about their past misbehavior. Second, projections are logically better for dealing with causal order. Finally, the composite measures based on future projections typically show higher reliabilities, as here. Even so, to increase confidence that our choice of the dependent variable does not bias our

tests, we conducted alternative analyses using measures of past misconduct (the descriptive statistics on these measures are displayed in table 1). These alternative analyses produced almost identical substantive results.

The seven criminal acts around which our survey is oriented are as follows: (1) hitting another person on purpose in an emotional outburst (force); (2) physically harming another person on purpose(force); (3) using violence or threat of violence to accomplish some personal goal (force); (4) taking money or property from others (criminal fraud) worth less than \$5 (translated to Ukrainian currency); (5) taking money or property from others (criminal fraud) worth more than \$5 but worth less than \$50 (expressed in Ukrainian currency); (6) taking money or property from others (criminal fraud) worth more than \$50 (Ukrainian equivalency), and (7) distorting the truth to get something one wants (wanted) (criminal/noncriminal fraud). Responses are in a five category format showing frequency of commission in the past 5 years (very often to never). In making future projections subjects were asked to imagine that they were “in a situation where you have a strong need or desire and the opportunity” to do each one and then to estimate the probability that they would do them (from very likely to not likely at all). Responses are scored from 0 to 4 so the higher scores reflect either greater past involvement in misconduct or greater likelihood of future involvement.

We derive a general index of future offense by summing raw scores on all seven future crime/deviance items ($\alpha=.85$). Furthermore, in order to determine if results vary by type of misconduct, we constructed similar summative indices for violence ($\alpha=.84$) and property offending ($\alpha=.91$). As is typical, the distributions of the seven crime/deviance items are skewed, so we analyze the natural logarithms of the three indices.

Control Variables

We incorporate five control variables that are probably antecedent to self-control and morality and might have affected the development of both. They are gender (0 for male and 1 for female); age (the year of birth), intactness of the family of origin during childhood (0 for living with two biological parents and 1 for other arrangements), perceived family economic status during childhood (“How would you evaluate the economic status of the family in which you grew up relative to other families in that time?” with five response categories ranging from very poor to very good), and childhood religiosity (“How religious were you at the time when you were growing up?” with five response categories from not religious at all to very religious). Descriptive statistics for all control variables are displayed in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the Analyses

	Range	Mean	SD	Valid Cases
Self-Control Cognitive Scale	-33.71–22.14	0	10.21	500
Morality Composite Scale	-14.63–6.52	0	5.78	500
Criminal/Deviant Behavior				
Projected Variety Crime Index	.00–28	5.57	5.36	500
Projected Variety Crime Index(<i>ln</i>)	.00–3.37	1.51	0.93	500
Projected Violent Offending Index	.00–12	1.86	2.27	500
Projected Violent Offending Index(<i>ln</i>)	.00–2.56	0.76	0.75	500
Projected Property Offending Index	.00–12	2.56	3.23	500
Projected Property Offending Index(<i>ln</i>)	.00–2.56	0.89	0.86	500
Past Variety Crime Index	.00–22	4.24	4.12	500
Past Variety Crime Index(<i>ln</i>)	.00–3.14	1.33	0.85	500
Past Violent Offending Index	.00–8	1.40	1.78	500
Past Violent Offending Index(<i>ln</i>)	.00–2.20	0.64	0.67	500
Past Property Offending Index	.00–12	1.72	2.50	500
Past Property Offending Index(<i>ln</i>)	.00–2.56	0.67	0.77	500
Control Variables				
Gender	0–1	0.62	0.49	500
Year of Birth	1920–1988	1963	17.32	500
Family Intactness	0–1	0.16	0.37	499
Childhood SES	1.00–5.00	3.11	0.78	500
Childhood Religiosity	1.00–5.00	2.84	1.11	500

Analysis

First, we explore the basic associations between the variables in our study. Table 2 presents bivariate correlations for all variables included in the analyses. Note, first, that our key theoretical variables – self-control and morality are significantly correlated with all measures of deviance.

Table 2. Correlations among Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Self-Control Cognitive Scale												
2. Morality Composite Scale	.41*											
3. Projected Variety Crime Index (<i>In</i>)	-.41*	-.74*										
4. Projected Violent Offending Index (<i>In</i>)	-.37*	-.60*	.76*									
5. Projected Property Offending Index (<i>In</i>)	-.31*	-.66*	.85*	.47*								
6. Past Variety Crime Index (<i>In</i>)	-.44*	-.78*	.82*	.61*	.70*							
7. Past Violent Offending Index (<i>In</i>)	-.39*	-.59*	.57*	.71*	.35*	.74*						
8. Past Property Offending Index (<i>In</i>)	-.32*	-.68*	.69*	.37*	.82*	.79*	.36*					
9. Gender	.17*	.19*	-.18*	-.22*	-.13*	-.22*	-.22*	-.19*				
10. Year of Birth	-.18*	-.32*	.40*	.33*	.26*	.38*	.31*	.22*	-.16*			
11. Family Intactness	-.02	-.01	.06	.04	.05	.06	.03	.05	.10	-.08		
12. Childhood SES	-.13*	-.12*	.13*	.11*	.17*	.14*	.13*	.12*	-.02	.31*	-.20*	
13. Childhood Religiosity	.17*	.16*	-.13*	-.09	-.11*	-.18*	-.16*	-.14*	.09*	-.02	.00	-.01
* = $p < .05$, two-tailed												

Further, we employ two alternative methods of analysis: 1) negative binomial regression, in which we preserve the original untransformed, although skewed, distributions of all dependent variables, and 2) ordinary least squares (OLS) regression using the dependent variables with logarithmic transformations to reduce skew. Since the substantive results for the two methods are similar, and we wish to enhance comparability with prior research, we report only the OLS results.

Results

Table 3 reports the calculated coefficients relevant to the issues under investigation. Consistent with most other research from various parts of the globe, our analyses show that self-control bears a significant zero order relationship with all of the measures of projected crime/deviance (model 1), with the magnitude of those associations being is at least modest (standardized coefficients range from $-.31$ to $-.41$; unstandardized from $-.03$ to $-.04$). Moreover, these relationships remain strong and statistically significant with socio-demographic variables controlled (model 2), and such controls do not produce significant reductions in any of the three test situations (three measures of projected crime), using the Paternoster et al. (1998) z test of the equality of regression coefficients.

Table 3. Regression Coefficients Representing the Effects of Self-Control and Morality on Projections of Future Crime^a

a. Variety Crime Index	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	b(SE)	B								
Self-Control	-.04 (.004)*	-.41	-.03 (.004)*	-.32					-.01 (.003)*	-.11
Gender			-.15 (.075)	-.08			-.06 (.057)	-.03	-.04 (.057)	-.02
Year of birth			.02 (.002)*	.32			.01 (.002)*	.16	.01 (.002)*	.16
Family intactness			.25 (.100)*	.10			.22 (.076)*	.09	.21 (.075)*	.08
Childhood SES			.07 (.049)	.06			.08 (.037)*	.06	.07 (.037)	.06
Child. Religiosity			-.05 (.032)	-.06			-.01 (.025)	-.01	-.00 (.025)	-.00
Morality					-.12 (.005)*	-.74	-.11 (.005)*	-.68	-.10 (.005)*	-.64
Adj. R ²	.16		.28		.55		.58		.59	

b. Violent Offending Index	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	b(SE)	B								
Self-Control	-.03 (.003)*	-.37	-.02 (.003)*	-.30					-.01 (.003)*	-.14
Gender			-.20 (.063)*	-.13			-.16 (.055)*	-.10	-.14 (.055)*	-.09
Year of birth			.01 (.002)*	.26			.01 (.002)*	.15	.01 (.002)*	.14
Family intactness			.14 (.083)	.07			.12 (.074)	.06	.11 (.073)	.05
Childhood SES			-.00 (.041)	-.00			.01 (.036)	.01	-.00 (.036)	-.00
Child. Religiosity			-.01 (.027)	-.02			.01 (.024)	.01	.02 (.024)	.03
Morality					-.08 (.005)*	-.60	-.07 (.005)*	-.54	-.06 (.005)*	-.49
Adj. R ²	.14		.22		.36		.39		.40	

c. Property Offending Index	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	b(SE)	B	b(SE)	B	b(SE)	B	b(SE)	B	b(SE)	B
Self-Control	-.03 (.004)*	-.31	-.02 (.004)*	-.25					-.00 (.003)	-.04
Gender			-.11 (.076)	-.06			-.02 (.061)	-.01	-.02 (.061)	-.01
Year of birth			.01 (.002)*	.18			.00 (.002)	.02	.00 (.002)	.02
Family intactness			.21 (.100)*	.09			.17 (.081)*	.07	.16 (.081)*	.07
Childhood SES			.11 (.049)*	.10			.11 (.040)*	.10	.11 (.040)*	.10
Childhood Religiosity			-.04 (.033)	-.06			-.00 (.026)	.00	.00 (.027)	.00
Morality					-.10 (.005)*	-.66	-.10(.005)*	-.64	-.09 (.006)*	-.62
Adj. R ²	.10		.15		.44		.44		.44	

^a N=500 in all models

* p < .05, two-tailed

The figures for models 3, 4, and 5 are relevant to our primary concern with the importance of morality relative to self-control in the production of misconduct. In line with most previous research on morality and crime, the findings displayed in model 3 indicate that morality, like self-control, has a strong and significant zero-order relationship with all three measures of crime/deviance (standardized coefficients range from -.60 for the violence index to -.74 for the variety index of crime/deviance). Even with all control variables in the equations (model 4), morality shows strong, significant associations with the three measures of misconduct (standardized coefficients range from -.54 for the violence index to -.68 for the general index of crime/deviance). Moreover, coefficient comparison tests indicate that in no instance does taking into account the control variables significantly reduce the magnitude of the morality coefficients.

As the figures for model 5 show, with all variables in the equation, morality continues to show a strong and significant association with projections of crime (standardized coefficients range from -.49 for the violence index to -.64 for the general index of crime/deviance), the magnitude of which is only slightly (and in all instances insignificantly) reduced by the inclusion of self-control in these equations. However, the association of self-control with misconduct is not as robust. With the inclusion of morality in our predictive equations, coefficients for self-control in all three equations are significantly reduced, in one instance (property offending) to a level below significance. Yet, the coefficients for self-control remain significant in the equations predicting projections of violent offending and the general index of crime/deviance even when morality and other control variables are taken into consideration. These findings indicate that self-control predicts general crime/deviance and violence independently of other factors, including morality.

At the same time, the standardized coefficients for morality substantially exceed those for self-control. Even allowing for possible biases due to cognitive or self-projective tendencies for consistency, the magnitude of the morality coefficients suggests that, consistent with Wikström's contention that morality is a more important explanatory factor in crime causation than self-control, morality may be a more potent predictor than self-control [43].

Discussion

Analyses of survey data from Ukraine confirm a basic relationship between self-control and projected crime/deviance and, thereby, help to bolster the claims of Self-Control Theory to be general, applying to all cultural contexts. Therefore, the results are in line with the corpus of literature on self-control, which suggests that self-control has to be prominent in a complete explanation of criminal/deviant behavior. However, the findings also follow most other research in showing that self-control is only one of several important predictors of crime/deviance and not necessarily the strongest one. In fact, according to these data, morality shows stronger associations with the measures of crime and withstands the influence of control variables better than does self-control.

In addition, the results show that associations of morality with crime/deviance are not confined to well-surveyed countries. Morality seems to be a general and key predictor of criminal conduct even with the powerful competitor, self-control, taken into account. Although numerous scholars, particularly sociologists, have theorized the import of morality in generating law abiding behavior, it has been relatively neglected by criminological theorists and researchers. Not only is it not a “standard” variable in most criminological research, but also none of the leading theories of the past two decades have given it a primary place. At best, some of those theories treat morality as a contingency for the operation of some other variables or as one of several variables that may converge in affecting behavior [1, 2, 4, 6, 34]. Therefore, it appears that the ideas of Wikström and his associates deserve attention, although they may be unnecessarily and unjustifiably bold, in particular overlooking the possibility of “neutralization” as well as other factors that may render basic moral feelings and beliefs of secondary importance [4, 32].

These results, like many before, suggest that successful explanation and prediction of criminal behavior probably will require some form of theoretical integration. Theories with a single explanatory variable are likely to be inadequate, even though that single variable may be quite important. A successful integrated theory probably will include morality and self-control.

The above observations, however, must be tempered by recognition of potential weaknesses in our research. First, the data are from a country whose citizens are less familiar with surveys generally. Our procedures of guaranteeing anonymity and of collecting sensitive information through a private checklist out of view of the interviewers seemed to help place the respondents at ease, but we cannot be sure of the accuracy of the data. Moreover, most of the measurement is relatively crude and the possibility that some of the apparent effect of morality may be because of efforts by respondents to achieve cognitive consistency or to project images of themselves as consistent individuals looms large. Finally, our conclusions might be distorted by the cultural context in which the study was conducted. Perhaps self-control is more important and morality less important in other parts of the world. But, until additional research is conducted in a variety of cultural contexts, such possibilities will remain matters of speculation.

Conclusion

Data from a random sample of Ukrainians show self-control to be related to self-projections of crime/deviance at a level similar to that revealed by surveys in other countries, thereby, strengthening the claim that Self-Control Theory is resistant to cultural variations. However, morality, a competitive variable, is also significantly and strongly associated with crime/deviance and it seems to be independent of, and noninteractive with, self-control in predicting criminal probabilities. In addition, morality shows considerably more robustness than self-control, and its predictive power seems to exceed that of self-control.

Overall, our analyses demonstrate that self-control is an important variable that must be taken into account in explaining criminal behavior, but they also confirm that self-control is probably only one of the causal factors in misbehavior, perhaps not even the most potent one. The fact that the morality measures show stronger associations with crime and withstand the influence of control variables better than self-control provides some support for the basic contention of Situational Action Theory that (lack of) morality is the prime factor in explaining criminal behavior, overshadowing self-control. Yet, the results also point to the wisdom of theoretical integration leading to a theory featuring morality and self-control as key variables.

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МОРАЛЬНІСТЬ, САМОКОНТРОЛЬ ТА ЗЛОЧИННІСТЬ

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У статті запропоновано обговорення теорії самоконтролю через дослідження її можливої переваги пов'язаної з категорією моральності та ймовірності злочинної діяльності. Звертаючись до опитування, що ґрунтувалося на випадковій вибірці домогосподарств у Львові, ми стверджуємо, що самоконтроль є важливим чинником, який може допомогти передбачити ймовірність злочинної діяльності в незвичному культурному контексті. Водночас моральність також є важливим незалежним чинником, сила якого може перевищувати значимість самоконтролю. Врахування моральності значно зменшує коефіцієнти, що вимірюють самоконтроль, часом виключаючи їх зовсім. Моральність засвідчує низький зв'язок із самоконтролем як можливості передбачення ймовірності злочинної діяльності. Результати дослідження свідчать про те, що нова теорія ситуативної дії, яка вказує на (слабку) моральність як визначальну причину злочинної діяльності та ставить під сумнів відносну важливість самоконтролю, повинна бути переосмислена. Загалом, результати підтверджують значимість самоконтролю як фактору діяльності, що відхиляється від норми, та наголошують на важливості звернення уваги на моральність як потенційну причину такої поведінки.

Ключові слова: самоконтроль, злочинна діяльність, моральність.

МОРАЛЬНОСТЬ, САМОКОНТРОЛЬ И ПРЕСТУПНОСТЬ

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В статье предложено обсуждение теории самоконтроля посредством исследования ее возможного преимущества связанного с категорией моральности и вероятности преступной деятельности. Обращаясь к исследованию, которое основывалось на случайной выборке домохозяйств во Львове, мы утверждаем, что самоконтроль является важным фактором, способным помочь предвидеть вероятность преступной деятельности в необычном культурном контексте. В тоже время моральность также является независимым фактором, сила которого может превышать самоконтроль. Принятие во внимание моральности значительно уменьшает коэффициенты, которые измеряют самоконтроль, иногда исключая его совсем. Результаты

исследования свидетельствуют о том, что новая теория ситуативного действия, которая указывает на (слабую) моральность как определяющую причину преступной деятельности и ставит под сомнение относительную важность самоконтроля должна быть переосмыслена. В целом результаты подтверждают значимость самоконтроля как фактора деятельности, которая отклоняется от нормы, и акцентируют на важности обращения внимания на моральность как потенциальную причину такого поведения.

Ключевые слова: самоконтроль, преступная деятельность, моральность.

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